

Expect. Employ Empower.



Alabama State Rehabilitation Council 2021 Annual Report

*Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Messages from SRC chairperson and ADRS commissioner	3
A unique partnership	4
Mission.....	4
Membership composition	5
Functions	6
Local advisory councils	7
Performance	8-9
Subcommittee activities	10-13
2021 highlights	14
Membership demographics.....	15-17
Conflict of Interest Policy	18

Expect. **Employ. Empower.**

As chairman of the State Rehabilitation Council, it is an honor to work with this wonderful team to represent persons with disabilities and keep them informed of the services available to help them become independent and self-sufficient through gainful employment.

I've long been committed to this mission as Disability Services and Outreach Manager for Regions Bank and look forward to continued progress in this new role.

This report outlines the SRC's accomplishments in FY2021 while once again facing the challenges of a pandemic. The highlighted information shows the strong commitment of this council in positively impacting the lives of Alabamians with disabilities.



Kathy Lovell, chairperson
State Rehabilitation Council



The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services works hard to make sure that people with disabilities have a chance to reach their goals. Strong partnerships are crucial to the department's success.

In FY 2021, the Vocational Rehabilitation Service division of ADRS partnered with the State Rehabilitation Council to provide education and employment-related services to Alabamians with disabilities, with many finding employment.

As we enter a new year, I would like to recognize SRC members for their commitment to quality service and excellence. Thanks to a strong partnership, I believe the SRC and ADRS will continue – both personally and professionally – to focus on providing all Alabamians with disabilities an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services



A unique partnership:

Vocational Rehabilitation Service and the State Rehabilitation Council

In January 1995, as mandated by the Alabama Legislature, Vocational Rehabilitation Service was moved from the State Department of Education to the newly created Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). This milestone event created a unique partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the newly named Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. Working in partnership with ADRS, SRC provides valuable input in administrative codes and rules necessary to regulate Alabama's vocational rehabilitation services.

Working together, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council strengthen the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services for all Alabamians with disabilities.

The mission of the council is ...

... to provide support and assistance to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services through program planning, policy development, and delivery of services, thus preparing Alabama's citizens with disabilities for competitive employment.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Membership Composition

Mandated Representation	Current Number of Representatives	Number of People with Disabilities	Number of Parents
Commissioner	1	0	0
State Independent Living Council (SILC)	2	2	0
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (State Department of Education)	1	0	0
Client Assistance Program	1	1	1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	1	0	0
Community Rehabilitation Programs	1	0	0
Business, Industry and Labor	6	0	0
Physical Disabilities	8	8	1
Cognitive / Learning Disabilities	1	1	1
Sensory Disabilities	4*	4	0
Mental Illness	1	1	0
Intellectual Disability	1	1	0
Advocacy Organization	1	1	0
American Indian Program Representative	0	0	0
WIA Representative	1**	0	0
Former or Current Recipient of VRS Services	14	14	0
Parent Training Center Representative	1	0	0
Assistive Technology Program Representative	1	0	0
Parent or family member of a person with a disability	2	0	2
Total	48*	33	5

SRC membership consists of persons with disabilities, parents and guardians of persons with disabilities, advocates, service providers, and representatives of the business industry and labor community.

Members are appointed by the governor, and most have a personal interest in ensuring that Alabama's citizens with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to become productive and self-sufficient through gainful employment. Membership is geographically and culturally diverse to assure a broad view into decisions that impact vocational rehabilitation services.

* Actual membership is 34, with some individuals representing more than one category, but includes those who resigned or had their terms expire in 2020. Persons with disabilities comprise a majority (16) of members. This number does not include persons whose successors have been appointed.

** Does not include sensory disabilities



SRC Functions

- to review and analyze the State Plan and advise ADRS regarding its related responsibilities within the plan
- in partnership with ADRS, to develop and review goals and priorities, evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, and submit reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration commissioner
- to advise ADRS regarding authorized activities under the Rehabilitation Act and to assist in preparation of the State Plan and its amendments and in carrying out other requirements of the Rehabilitation Act
- to review and analyze the effectiveness of consumer and other surveys
- to provide for coordination and establishment of working relationships among ADRS, the State Independent Living Council, and independent living centers
- to coordinate council activities with activities of other councils
- to perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act
- to prepare and submit an annual report of council activities to the governor and the ADRS commissioner

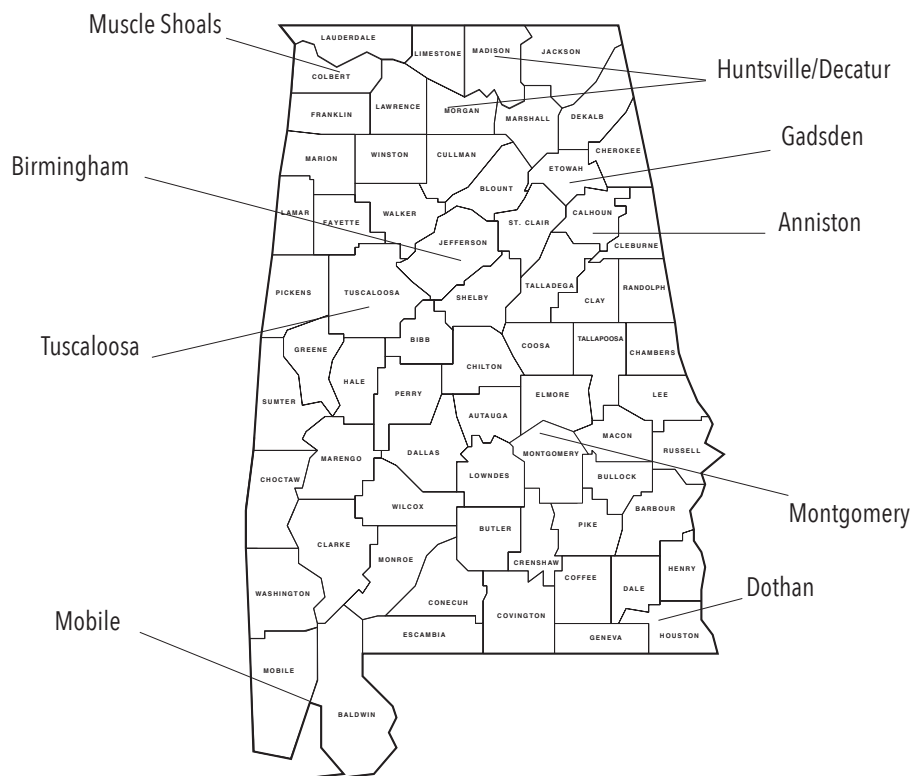
Local advisory councils meet regularly to ensure a voice for consumers at the grassroots level.

In FY 2021, topics of discussion included:

- Updates on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) including COVID-19 ADA impact
- Continued review of state legislative proposals, such as those related to a state tax credit for employers that hire people with disabilities
- Unmet needs of persons with disabilities to provide the Governor's Office on Disability with information
- Accessible airplane securement systems
- Proposed Federal legislation
- Medicaid waivers including new community waiver programs
- Dental Clinic access
- COVID-19 update

* Meetings were held via Zoom due to COVID-19

These advisory groups continue to increase opportunities to obtain consumer input at the local level and as recruiting grounds for SRC



SRC performance

During quarterly meetings on March 9, May 11, Aug. 10, and Oct. 19, 2021 (all meetings were held via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the SRC sought to perform the following functions:

Review and input on consumer satisfaction surveys for blind and deaf individuals and their results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received information on the Blind Services Satisfaction Survey• Received information on the Deaf Services Satisfaction Survey• Made no recommendations for changes to these surveys
Review and input on consumer satisfaction surveys for the general VR program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received information on the general VR Satisfaction Survey.• Made no recommendations for changes to these surveys• Received CSNA update• Approved CSNA goals and priorities
Review and input on impartial hearing officer (IHO) List	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received information on hearings conducted during 2021• There are four members• Recommended no changes to IHO list• Approved continuation of list during 2021
Reviewed and updated SRC Resource Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changed mileage reimbursement to 56 cents per mile
Review and provide input on Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRC members were provided information on the Agency's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) and recommended no significant changes when provided the opportunity to give input.• Each SRC member was notified of current training programs for VR staff and counselors and made no significant comments when given the opportunity to give input.
Review and input on State Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No comments were received on the state plan or attachments.• Recommended no changes• The next State Plan revision will be in 2022

Training and/or information on the following subjects:

- ADRS Budget
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- VR production and average hourly working wages
- Mental Health Peer Support Pilot
- Adapted driving program
- Project SEARCH
- Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities
- Workshops Empowerment Inc.
- VR Transition program
- VR Supported Employment program
- Lakeshore facility

Coordinated council activities with activities of other councils

- Provided annual reports and resource plans to other SRCs upon request
- The SRC liaison continued to participate in the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council conference calls and annual training conferences.

Established working relationships among the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and independent living centers (ILCs)

- The SRC has made its meetings open to members of the public including those of the ILCs or SILC.
- Some SRC members attend SILC meetings and report back to the SRC any significant information.
- One member of the SRC is the chair of the SILC and shares information from SILC meetings with SRC members

Perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act

- Signed new conflict of interest forms

SRC subcommittee activities

Executive Subcommittee

Chair: Karl Wade

Vice chair: Kathy Lovell * Carl Flemons **

Members: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To conduct planning for and administration of SRC meetings

Responsibilities

- Schedule and make arrangements for quarterly meetings
- Plan the SRC agenda
- Report accomplishments
- Nominate officers
- Facilitate appointment of subcommittee chairs and SRC members
- Update SRC Resource Plan
- Assist in Preparation of SRC Budget
- Plan SRC Orientation

Accomplishments/Activities

- Scheduled and made arrangements for quarterly meetings, planned the agendas and reported SRC accomplishments
- Appointed new subcommittee members to Consumer Satisfaction/Program Evaluation and Employment Subcommittees
- Amended the SRC Resource Plan to decrease the mileage rate to 56 cents per mile
- Nominated new SRC Vice Chair and new SRC Chair
- Set meeting dates for 2022 with SRC approval
- * Elected new chair for 2022 ** Elected new vice chair for 2022

Business Relations and Employment Subcommittee

Chair: Kathy Lovell

Vice Chair: Vacant

Members: Susan Crow* • Michelle Galipeau • Heath Hendrix

• Scott Besong* • Carl Flemons • Andrew Richards • Glenda Statum

Staff Liaison: Leslie Dawson

Vision Statement: To enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities and employer satisfaction with VR services

This subcommittee continued to maintain the following priorities:

1. OFCCP Section 503, 7 percent people with disabilities hiring quota for federal contractors
2. Business and labor market trends that parallel or do not parallel consumer goals
3. E-Verify for employers and agency
4. Federal employment issues under Schedule A
5. Department incentives to promote hiring and retention of people with disabilities

Recommendation

- The Agency should raise hourly wages in its WBL program

Activities

Discussed the following:

- The Delta Variant's continued COVID-19 effect on employers
- Statewide training for career centers
- Apprenticeships with health care providers, automotive suppliers
- Disability track at Statewide Workforce Conference
- Work based learning (WBL)
- Recruitment event for Huntsville FBI office
- Digital accessibility training
- Workshop with Disability:IN

* Rotated off Aug. 31, 2021

** New Chair for 2021- Kathy Lovell

Legislative/Public Information Subcommittee

Chair: Michele Martin

Members: Linda Lamberth • Jack Franklin • Michael Talley

Vision statement: To inform SRC members of existing and new legislation which affects the VRS program and people with disabilities and to advocate for legislation, policies and practices that will enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Responsibilities

- Same as vision statement above

Activities

- Monitored state and federal legislation that affects individuals with disabilities and provided information on pending legislation
- Agreed to continue focus on state funding as a legislative priority

Consumer Services/Program Evaluation Subcommittee

Chair: Dr. Marie Kraska

Vice Chair: Jeana Winter

Members: Rachel Hughes • Susan Goldthwaite* • Tom Schwarz • Jon Brock • Kim Mensi • George Neal

• Tim McClure • Helen Baker

Staff Liaison: Michael Quinn

SRC subcommittee activities

Vision statement: To enhance consumer satisfaction with services, service providers, and employment, and to assist VRS in developing and implementing strategies to ensure consumer satisfaction

Responsibilities

- Facilitate council review of the agency's consumer satisfaction survey and results
- Collaborate with the agency in conducting the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment every three years

Activities

- Reviewed Blind Consumer Satisfaction Survey and its results
- Made no recommendations or changes to existing blind survey
- Discussed and received information on new survey process for general VR Program
- Revised information on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process
- Discussed and received information on updates to the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process
- Received updated information on proposal for peer support specialists for mental health consumers
- Announced and discussed current events for consumers
- Provided updates on member programs

* Rotated off August 31, 2021

Membership/Nomination Subcommittee

Chair: Tom Schwarz

Members: Jack Franklin

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To maintain SRC membership so that it meets federal law and enables the SRC to perform its duties

Responsibilities

- Maintain current membership list
- Recruit new members to fill vacancies
- Secure re-appointments of existing members where eligible
- Assist in orientation of new members
- Assist in identifying training needs of SRC members

Activities

- Through the SRC liaison, updated the SRC list on the Alabama secretary of state's website
- Facilitated reappointment of eligible members
- Nominated members to fill vacancies and facilitated their appointment
- Gave update on SRC membership status at most SRC meetings

Bylaws Revision Subcommittee

Chair: Carl Flemons

Members: Jack Franklin

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To maintain SRC Bylaws so that they are consistent with federal law and allow for smooth operation of the SRC

Responsibilities

- Monitor effectiveness of bylaws
- Recommend any necessary changes on an annual basis

Activities

- Continued to monitor the effectiveness of the bylaws and will recommend any necessary changes yearly

Deaf Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Marcus Washington

Staff Liaison: Bedarius Bell

Vision statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are deaf

Responsibilities

- Report on issues of the deaf and assist in the development of a strategic plan for people who are deaf

Activities

- Continued to inform SRC members of issues in the Deaf community
- Discussed training conferences for deaf persons and staff and issues with deaf and deaf/blind persons receiving unemployment benefits`

Blind Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Michael Talley

Staff Liaison: Dana Barber

Vision statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are blind or visually impaired.

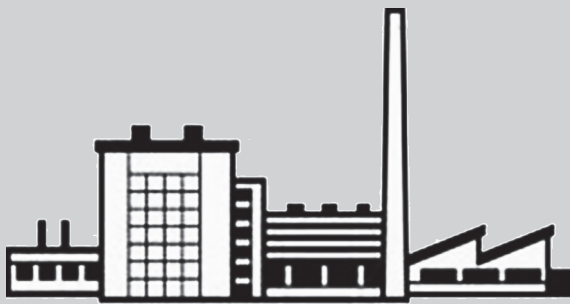
Responsibilities

- Report on issues of the blind or visually impaired in the development of a strategic plan for people who are blind or visually impaired

Activities

- Informed SRC members of the results of the Blind Surveys
- Shared information from the Blind Advisory meetings
- Discussed College Quest, impact of COVID-19 on blind vendors, technology symposium

2021 highlights



5,083

Services provided to Alabama's Business and Industry
(including recruitment assistance and disability management, training, and employee retention services, with a special emphasis on federal contractor businesses)

20

*community VRS offices
strategically located
throughout the state*



5,646

*Services provided to VR consumers
from ADRS business relations consultants*
(to ensure their "job readiness" and to facilitate
their employment in the public and private sector)

504

consumers placed in employment

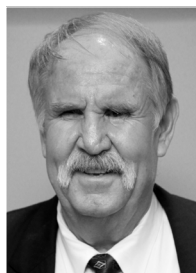


883

VR consumers served



SRC membership



Karl Wade
Chair, consumer
Prattville
Rotated off August 31, 2021



Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Montgomery



Parent
Scott Besong
Auburn
Rotated off August 31, 2021



Tech Program Representative (STAR)
Helen Baker
Montgomery



Consumer
Isaac Beavers
Huntsville
Appointed September 2021



Consumer
Jon Brock
Birmingham



Employer/CRP Representative
Susan Crow
Workshops Inc.
Birmingham
Rotated off August 31, 2021



Consumer
SILC
Jack Franklin
Vina



Employer
Michelle Galipeau
Children's Hospital
Hoover



Consumer
Carl Flemons
Somerville



WIA Board Rep
Phee Friend
Montgomery
Appointed September 17, 2021



Special Education
Susan Goldthwaite
State Department of Education
Montgomery
Rotated off August 31, 2021



Employer
Heath Hendrix
Onin
Tuscaloosa



SACAP Representative
Rachel Hughes
State of Alabama
Client Assistance Program
Montgomery

SRC membership



WIA Board Representative
Mickey Hutto
Montgomery
Rotated off 8-31-21



Program Evaluation Representative
Dr. Maria Kraska
Auburn



Consumer
Karin Korb
Birmingham
Resigned April 12, 2021



Consumer
Bob Lujano
Birmingham



Employer
Kathy Lovell
Regions Bank
Birmingham
* New chair effective 10-19-21



Consumer
Timothy McClure
Mobile



Consumer
Linda Lambreth
Anniston
Rotated off 8-31-21



Employer
Jaime Mitchell
VA
Tuscaloosa



Consumer
George Neal
Montgomery



Employer
Sherri Moultrie
Birmingham



Family Member
Dr. Michele Martin
Auburn



Consumer
Kim Mensi
Montgomery



Labor
Keith Patterson
Opelika



VRS Counselor
Andrew Richards
Montgomery



Consumer/Veteran
Tom Schwarz
Semmes



Employer
Glenda Statum
Netek Inc.
Brownsboro

SRC membership



Consumer
Joey Taff
Montgomery



Consumer
Michael Talley
Bessemer



Consumer
Chris Tidwell
Tuscaloosa



Consumer
Marcus Washington
Pelham



**Community Rehab Program Representative/
Employer**
Star Wray
Achievement Center
Opelika
Appointed September 17, 2021



Parent Training Center Representative
Jeana Winter
Alabama Parent Education Center
Wetumpka



SRC Conflict of Interest Policy

Statement of Policy

No member of the council shall cast a vote on any matter that would provide direct financial benefit to the member or the member's organization or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under state law. 34 CFR Part 361.17 (g). When conflicts of interest are identified, the council member to whom the conflict applies must abstain from voting on the issue causing the conflict.

Required Disclosure

Each council member shall disclose orally or in writing all conflicts of interest, including those which are unclear or potential. Such disclosure shall be made to the chairperson of the council.

Effective Date

This Conflict of Interest Policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by a majority of the council. Upon such approval, this policy is incorporated by reference into the council bylaws.

Approved: November 29, 2000

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE TO FORMER MEMBERS:

Karl Wade, Scott Besong, Susan Crow, Susan Goldthwaite, Mickey Hutto and Linda Lambreth

Comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA)

Goals and priorities approved at May 11, 2021 SRC meeting

1. Assure that Alabamians with disabilities negatively affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic are of special interest and concern within planning and operational efforts aimed at recovery.

Rationale: Data from the preceding 12 months demonstrate a remarkable disruption in service provision to Alabamians with disabilities affected by the pandemic. Targeted efforts may be necessary to restore services to pre-COVID-19 levels.

2. Advance efforts that improve the department's working alliance and integration with the Alabama Workforce Development System.

Rationale: In the past four years ADRS has become more integrated with the Alabama Workforce Development System than ever before, but there are still many opportunities for growth and collaboration. ADRS should further leverage inter-departmental Workforce partnerships to address the employment needs of Alabamians with disabilities.

3. Improve outreach and service delivery to unserved and under served Alabamians with disabilities.

Rationale: Data from this CSNA show that certain sub-populations (such as those with Intellectual Disabilities, Serious Mental Illness, Blindness, Autism, Low Income individuals concerned with the loss of public benefits, and individuals who are Veterans) may require targeted strategies to improve participation and successful outcomes.

4. Develop and improve training and other resources for community rehabilitation programs.

Rationale: Enhanced communication and training for providers of employment services is an expressed need from community programs and a vital part of the department's strategy to develop high quality employment resources for VR consumers.

5. Advance collaboration between administrative and field staff to improve operational efficiencies, develop needed training, and update antiquated or unclear policies and procedures.

Rationale: The service needs of Alabamians with disabilities require a well-trained, efficient work force that is

unburdened by unnecessary or cumbersome administrative requirements.

6. Continue to optimize departmental resources, ensure operational efficiency, and avoid limitations that would be imposed by an Order of Selection.

Rationale: Inadequate acquisition, allocation or management of departmental resources could lead to conditions that require some eligible individuals to be placed on a waiting list for services.

With approval and final input from the State Rehabilitation Council, the goals outlined above will provide a foundation for planning within the two-year State Plan revision that will be due in the spring of 2022.

Unmet Needs Identified in the 2020 CSNA

Throughout the fall of 2019 and into the Spring of 2020, ADRS participated with other WIOA core and partner agencies in a Local Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Engagement process. These public forums were led by Governor's Office on Education and Workforce Transformation (GOEWT). Local Stakeholder Input Meetings were completed within each of Alabama's seven workforce regions and were well attended by ADRS staff members, SRC members, consumers, and a wide array of individuals from Alabama's disability community. From these meetings, seven key areas of unmet need were identified:

- Improved access to public transportation, especially in rural areas, would broaden access to opportunity,
- Better availability of quality childcare would, for those with young families, remove barriers and disincentives to labor force participation,
- Greater ADA compliance and disability accommodations would enable more individuals to enter and sustain employment,
- Greater access to technology including broadband access in rural areas would open doors to participation in training and employment,
- Enhancements in quality and equity in education and training opportunities,
- Improved coordination and accountability among Workforce System service providers; and
- Greater access to health and healthcare benefits.

Prepared by:



Alabama Department of
REHABILITATION SERVICES

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Commissioner

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